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# SALT Enforcement Options Limited

The catchword in the debate over the strategic arms limitation treaty is "verification." Will we be able to tell if the Russians are cheating?

An equally important word—but one that is rarely if ever mentioned by supporters or opponents of SALT—is "enforcement." What will we do if we catch the Russians cheating?

A law that's not enforced is no law at all. Drivers will speed at will if police never make arrests. But there is no impartial traffic cop to flag down violators of SALT II. Each side must be its own enforcer.

As a practical matter, the enforcement options are limited and tricky. We can complain, of course, but the Soviets have a long track record of shrugging off complaints. We can go to the brink of nuclear war, as we did in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. But the implications of such saber-rattling in the nuclear age are grotesque.

Provisions of both SALT I and II call for disagreements to be settled by the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC). The history of SALT I, however, suggests that the SCC carries about as much weight with the Russians as a Little League umpire.

Top-secret documents and intelligence sources reveal a few Soviet tricks that President Carter will not discuss to the Congress when he delivers his address on the SALT talks. The Soviets "drove trucks through the loopholes" of the first treaty, as one source put it, and we challenged their cheating only mildly. "We sucked our thumbs," one SCC source told our associate Dale Van Atta. "It shouldn't happen again."

The "don't-get-tough" policy came right from the top. A secret Defense Department memo in 1976, titled "SALT Contingency Planning," advised against flexing too much muscle on "ambiguous" or "minor" violations of SALT.

"In the event Soviet actions were ambiguous, then it would seem that the U.S. response would be to keep our options open in case of future abrogation and conduct those activities which are consistent with the letter of the agreement," the memo states. "This is basically our current plan."

In other words, the Soviets were allowed to cheat a little, but we played by the rules. It didn't take the Russians long to catch onto this pussycat policy, and they cheated their way blithely through the first arms treaty.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger approved of this appeasement, and attempted to rationalize it in the secret National Security Decision Memorandum 283 to the Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The U.S. Commissioner (SCC) should inform his counterpart that the U.S. government is not accusing or implying that the USSR is in violation with existing SALT agreements," Kissinger wrote. "[The issues] involve questions concerning compliance and related situations we consider ambiguous. The purpose of raising these issues is to resolve these questions, and, as necessary, to bring about corrective action."

Kissinger suggested that if the Russians were unresponsive, we might offer to back down on some of our own "ambiguous" interpretations—in

effect, proffer the Soviets a bribe to obtain compliance.

The only alternative to complaint or confrontation would be to disavow the treaty altogether. Kissinger would never have done that—he and President Nixon had gotten too much political mileage out of SALT I.

For the same reason, President Carter is unlikely to scuttle SALT II, one of the few concrete achievements of his administration. And that's why you will hear little about enforcement, the insoluble dilemma of SALT, when Carter addresses Congress on the treaty.